DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 393 FL 009 579

TITLE English Language Teaching Profile: Poland.
INSTITUTION British Council, London (England). English-Teaching Information Centre.
PUB DATE May 75
NOTE 10p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Educational Policy; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; *Higher Education; Instructional Materials; *Language Instruction; Language Role; Language Tests; *Secondary Education; *Teacher Education; Teaching Conditions
IDENTIFIERS *Poland

ABSTRACT

A profile of English language teaching in Poland is provided in outline form. The following topics are dealt with: the role of English in the country, teaching hours per week in English at each educational level, English language versus English literature, public examinations, syllabuses and textbooks, specialized English programs, adult English classes, staffing and qualifications for English teaching, teacher training, professional organizations for English teachers, teaching materials, English outside the educational system, British support for the teaching of English, American support for the teaching of English, strengths and weaknesses of English language teaching in Poland, and current research and bibliography. (SW)

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ENGLISH-TEACHING INFORMATION CENTRE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE

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COUNTRY: Poland

May 1975

1. The Role of English

English is certainly not spoken widely in Poland: encounters, even with such groups as the militia (police), customs officials, shop workers or taxi-drivers, where one would normally anticipate some basic communicative English, have to take place in Polish - and occasionally German. Neither, as would have been the case in pre-war Poland, is French available at a common level. Perhaps this can be accounted for by much of the tourism still being undertaken from the Socialist Countries. Nevertheless the Polish Tourist Organisation, Orbis, have ensured that at all the main hotels in the principal cities, the staff have more than adequate English to deal with their duties. The same is the case at the International Airport at Warsaw.

The Polish authorities, however, are greatly aware of the need for English as the international medium of communication, and much is being done, and much planned, to promote the spread of English - for trade, touristic, scientific and technological purposes. One notes at the annual Warsaw Book Fair how many specialist texts are being printed in Poland in English, as well as in the other Socialist Countries. Insidiously a number of English words are finding their way into public signs and displays - STOP, PARKING, AUTO-REPAIR, OIL AND PETROL, DANCING, STREEP-TEASE (sic) etc are all common enough everywhere, even when in each case there is a perfectly acceptable Polish alternative.

1.1 English is not at present taught in Polish state primary schools from age range 7 - 14/15 at all - though this is planned in the near future; whether this can easily be realised is a different question - there is a shortage of teachers of English at all levels and much money and effort is at present being invested to remedy this. In the secondary schools, apart from Russian which is not an optional language, English is far ahead of all other languages on the preference scale - a rough figure, over the board, would suggest that some 60% of secondary students opt for English, with French and German making up the full percentage. There are a few schools which employ English in a way that approaches using it as a 'medium of instruction' but it is, in fact, a somewhat hybrid process with English lexis introduced with Polish syntax. There are also schools that have 'enriched' language programmes, where the students get up to 4 more hours a week English with quite strikingly successful results, particularly in oral fluency. But standards in the secondary schools, despite a lot of effort in native textbook preparation, still tend to be those of a passive knowledge of English. This problem is recognised and attempts to make students conversationally proficient are at the advanced planning stage - new texts, teacher training programmes etc. At the tertiary level (in Poland the technical and academic universities enjoy parity of respect) English certainly in the English Philology Departments <u>is</u> the medium of instruction and many perceptive scientists and technologists have long since realised the professional importance of English to them and spend much energy in improving their English standards with formal and ad hoc courses of all sorts.

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1.2 It would not be true to say that English is used as 'a study language' apart from the above mentioned needs of scientists, technologists and the actual students of English Language and English Literature and in these cases certainly only at the tertiary level.

1.3 Apart from the instances noted in the opening paragraph, English is used as a medium of diplomatic communication (as far as Western Countries are concerned - and some Commonwealth Countries); learned papers that are to receive attention outside Poland will usually be printed in English in preference to any other language, and most Ministries and Institutes, especially those whose work involves contact with the West, will readily have available English speakers of some genuine calibre. However, it is sometimes, paradoxically, difficult to place an international call to an English-speaking country through the Warsaw Exchange except by using Polish.

1.4 Certainly, then, English is viewed with growing interest, as the 'second second language' of the country - for scientists and technologists, and all who are likely to have active and useful contacts that necessitate a command of English. It should be added American-English is generally as acceptable as British-English.

2. English Within the Educational System

2.1 Teaching hours per week in English

Primary Level: at present, none.

Secondary Level: normal 3 hours per week x 35 per year
enriched 6 hours per week x 35 per year

Tertiary Level: University English Department student: average 10 - 12 hours per week x 25 per year
Science/Technology student: 2 hours per week x 25 per year.

2.2 English Language vs English Literature

Primary Level: at present none, and no literature when the new programme is implemented.

Secondary Level: Language teaching only.

Tertiary Level: in the University English Philology Departments students have an option, at the end of their second year (of 4), to specialise in either literature or language/linguistics.

NB. It should be noted here:

i. That the overwhelming percentage of students studying English are women (some 90%)

ii. That the University English Philology Course contains a very strong pedagogical element - in theory, though not at all in practice, the Departments are intended to turn out teachers of English.

Generally speaking, of those who do English at the University level, the ones who opt for language acquire a high degree of proficiency at all levels,- oral and written - as well as having a sound knowledge of pedagogical approaches, based on theoretical and applied linguistics. This degree of sophistication is of recent years and largely the work of a single influential

figure, Professor Jacek Fisiak. Unfortunately many of these highly-trained students find employment OUTSIDE the teaching profession - probably under 10% find their way into secondary schools. Nevertheless these devoted few are already making their lively presence felt. English Literature is losing ground in the universities; all English Philology students are given a background of selected 'culture and institutions' in the UK, and this is often deemed sufficient. Literary students follow a course from Beowulf to Contemporary Literature. There is some degree of autonomy as regards the planning of courses, linguistic and literary, within individual universities, but the official syllabus should be adhered to.

2.3 Public Examinations

Secondary Level: the "Matura" Examination in English, taken at the age of 18 or 19, is largely to test a somewhat passive grammatical knowledge of English. There is at present no oral examination but changes are due.

Tertiary Level: at the end of each year in his 5 (old style) 4 (newly introduced) English Philology Course the student takes an examination set by his Department. In the first year many students are failed - perhaps an average of some 30-50% and have to leave the university; the failure rate declines in later years after this initial 'weeding out', but varies greatly between universities. Scientists and technologists would again sit internal examinations designed by their Departments.

2.4 English examinations would only be a formal requirement for those actively specialising in English. There is, however, the offical 'Panstwowy' Examination, open to workers at trade and scientific institutions, etc; it is basically a test of communicative skill in English, written and spoken, and carries some financial reward.

2.5 Syllabuses and Textbooks

Secondary Level: There are a set of English texts in 3 parts (with teachers' books) 'I LEARN ENGLISH' by Dr Smolska; these are derived from the Ministry of Basic Education's English syllabus. These texts are soon to be replaced by a more progressive series based on the new syllabus. 'New Concept English' by Alexander is an alternative choice.

Tertiary Level: The texts that the 'studia' (a 'studium' is language servicing centre for a Technical University) employ are certainly varied and at present still proliferating: recent example would be an ESP text written by two staff members of the 'Central School for Economic Planning'. Such texts are free of any predetermined syllabus influence. English Philology Departments, however, are bound by a Ministry of Higher Education syllabus, though only very loosely, and not to the extent of impeding departmental choices of texts and linguistic approaches.

2.6 Inspectorate

This applies only to the secondary level. The 'inspectors' are drawn from active teachers - or people with teaching responsibility, as far as can be gathered. Access to classrooms is difficult to obtain for outsiders, so it is hard to detail the exact role of the inspector in the classroom. Certainly the inspectorate have responsibility, to some degree - and shared with certain locally organised bodies with a centralised control - IKNs - for teacher in-service training, as well as safeguarding classroom standards.

Such inspectors would also be represented on bodies dealing with syllabus reform, textbook developments etc. The very recent changes in the structure of local government - Poland is now divided into 49 regional administrative regions - will entail reorganisation of the inspectorate at local level.

2.7 ESP

This emphasis grows, as will have already been seen. Commerce, science, technology and aviation all have specialised English programmes. Additionally miners, engineers, and agricultural and marine researchers, to give only a few examples, have special courses in English organised by their own cooperative endeavours. At a much higher level there are two formidable organisations NOT (roughly the 'Central Organisation for Technologists) which has branches throughout the country, and PAN (the Polish Academy of Science); these bodies run influential and intensive language courses throughout the year for graduated and often highly-qualified scientists and technologists - as well as special summer courses. But the basis of the ESP is initially done by the studia of the Technical Universities.

2.8 Adult English

It is possible for adult learners to join English courses at a number of institutes including LINGWISTA and the so-called METHODIST SCHOOL OF ENGLISH (only in Warsaw), as well as the many locally organised 'cooperatives'; private teachers thrive, and many people follow recorded courses, or those offered by the BBC overseas broadcasts. Additionally Polish Radio (material created by the Warsaw University English Department) provides (with English native speakers) a series of high-standard English Language programmes, throughout the year. If private language schools were permitted in Poland (and some discussion of this has been taking place) their success would be, in terms of enthusiastic students, phenomenal.

3. Teaching Cadre

Generally speaking there is a great shortage of qualified English teachers. After the war many English teachers were recruited on an ad hoc basis, and the secondary schools still have a number of English teachers whose devotion must be unquestioned, but whose English has sadly deteriorated over the years. In-service training can really do little for them. As noted earlier, the planned influx of highly-qualified teachers from the Philology Departments has not materialised. Teachers have very full programmes - often beyond 30 hours teaching a week - and the demands to be made on them either for release from teaching for in-service training or for after-hours training, obviously present enormous difficulties. With the anticipated embarking on a primary programme of English teaching the question still remains unresolved: 'Where are the teachers to come from?'

3.1 Staffing of English Teaching

Secondary Level: (see above general statement). Students graduated from Philology Departments and unqualified teachers. Very rarely indeed British staff. All Polish.

Tertiary Level: Predominantly Polish but with British and American lecturers for both the Universities and Technical Universities, recruited by official agencies, as well as staff (paid in soft zloty currency only) recruited by the the Polish authorities from UK or US. There are some Irish teachers in the university cadre. The currency exchange restrictions make financial incentives to teach in Poland unfavourable.

3.2 Qualifications of Teaching Staff

Secondary Level: The graduate of an English Philology Department has a good quality MA and usually for career reasons wishes to go on for a doctorate. With a doctorate the teacher would be unlikely to remain in a normal teaching post in a secondary school. The unqualified teachers might well, and probably would, have their MA in a subject other than English.

University Level: Most Polish teaching staff tend to have, sooner or later, doctorate, and would be expected to go on to 'docent', and eventually perhaps to 'habilitatia', which is really more a position than a qualification. British or American teachers would generally have an MA or its equivalent (eg Diploma in Applied Linguistics); a larger proportion of the Americans have a doctorate than do the British. University English Departments are happy to have a British or American teacher with them who is keen to pursue his own further studies to a doctorate level, and indeed do much to encourage this.

3.3 Teacher Training

Primary Level: The new educational programme to be implemented in the next few years demands a large number of teachers of English; it would be difficult at present to see where they are coming from.

Secondary Level: As explained above, the English Philology Departments of the Universities (some 8 Departments in all) have the responsibility for producing graduate teachers. A further development has been the establishment of the first English Department in a 'Pedagogical Institute' - a rough equivalent to our College of Education; English Departments will be added as these foundations spread, on a regional basis - and they are to have parity with the Universities academically.

Varied attempts, with active and extensive American cooperation, have taken place to encourage in-service training and opportunities for unqualified teachers to qualify: the success has been only partial, and American support has now been withdrawn. Nevertheless, a vast sum has been put by in Poland for teacher re-training - one figure quoted was 14,000,000 zls. Summer courses have been transformed from 'refresher courses' to culmination points in an overall 5-year retraining scheme, both for qualified and unqualified secondary teachers; as yet the grass-roots response to this has been disappointing. The Ministry of Basic Education, which controls both Primary and Secondary Education, to some extent, is not in a fully harmonious accord over questions of teacher training with the Ministry of Higher Education which controls the universities - and hence the graduate teachers destined for the secondary schools.

Tertiary Level: Professionally, tertiary education is the most attractive option for the newly graduated English teacher - shorter hours, chances for research, and opportunities for a much more prestigious and progressive career than in secondary teaching. There is no shortage of teachers at this level and the impression of those teaching in the universities is one of youthfulness and high quality.

3.4 Professional Organisations for Teachers of English

In the Polish context this is not really very relevant; there is, however, the Zwiezek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego' (the 'Teachers Trade Union') which

have regional departments nominally involved, at least, in the improvement of teachers' standards of English.

4. Teaching Materials

An introductory word must be said about the problems currency exchange produces with the question of textbooks. Hard (ie Western) currency is a precious commodity and never readily available either to individuals or to institutions. Allocations of grants for textbooks at the university level are stringently considered, so there has been at all levels, indeed, a tendency to invest in the home-produced books. Some of Alexander's courses, for instance, have been printed in Poland under licence and have been very popular. The British Council does what it can to help with back-up tapes and records and to some extent sets of texts, but because of financial limiations this can only be at the tertiary level.

4.1 Secondary Level: Textbooks are uniform (see above). They are, at present, a series by an experienced teacher and academic Dr Smolska: I LEARN ENGLISH. They are soon to be replaced by Dr Marton's and Leszek Skutnik's ENGLISH? YES. This is a lively new venture, backed by academic linguistic theoretical research and practical textbook writing experience; it is a big step forward and will be available in secondary schools 1975/6 onwards. Some progressive secondary schools, it should be noted, additionally produce their own material.

4.2 Tertiary Institutions: As already remarked, textbooks for ESP grow at a very healthy rate; this is indicative of the quality of teaching staff at this level. Nevertheless, standard British and American produced textbooks are valued - particularly the new edition of the Hornby Dictionary. At the university level British and American linguistic texts of all kinds are heavily in demand, the more au fait with linguistic developments the better.

5. English Outside the Educational System

There are, of course, no private schools of English in this Socialist country, but plenty of private teachers of English. Often, as should be evident now, professional groups who are interested in developing their proficiency in English, form their own 'cooperatives' - that is, they find a teacher or teachers and set up English courses, usually in their free vacation time, or in the evenings. The quality of these cooperatives varies with the status and authority and financial resources and size of the particular cooperative - NOT and PAN and LINGWISTA work at a high level of professionalism, whilst the Mining-Engineering Group does its best with less success; all of them from the Nurses' Association to the University Lecturers at Studia beg assistance from native speakers of whom there are so few to go around.

6. British Support for the Teaching of English

The British Council is the sole British agency giving support for the teaching of English. Its activities form a major part of the Council's work in the country. More specifically:

6.1 Summer Schools in Poland: The Council recruits from London and from our lecturers in Poland a total of some 24/25 lecturers and tutors to teach in summer schools (see above); well over 600 Polish participants are involved, all at the Tertiary Level.

6.2 Summer Schools in UK: The Council sends over 150 adult Poles annually to intensive courses - from specialist to general English - in Britain.

6.3 Bursars and Scholars: Each year 8-10 Polish specialists in ELT are awarded places in British universities and institutions for advanced studies, both in literature and language.

6.4 Specialist Tours: High level British specialists in literature - recently for example we have been visited by Professor L C Knights and Professor Wickham; and in the language field Professor Lyons and Dr David Carver have been to Polish universities to give seminars and lectures.

6.5 Testing of English for Fellowships: Nearly 300 candidates were tested in the current year, both by subjective assessment and the Davies Battery of Tests.

6.6 Functional Material: Loans of ELT tapes, records, books etc are made annually to more than 200 institutions.

6.7 British Lecturers in Polish Universities: (see below).

6.8 The Rabka Experiment: One of our British lecturers, Mr Shiell, in close cooperation with his Polish colleagues, teaches intensive ESP full-time to over 250 qualified scientists and technologists at Krakow in out-of-town centres; this course received a very significant follow-up when 22 of the Rabka teachers and students last year went on a specialised designed course at Glasgow, under the direction of Mr David Carver of Moray House, Edinburgh.

6.9 In Warsaw there is an ELO.

British Council recruited formula post lecturers are teaching in Universities and Technical Universities in Warsaw, Lodz, Poznan, Lublin, Wroclaw and Krakow: there are 8 in all, 2 teaching literature, the remainder language/ linguistics.

There are no VSOs or other British volunteers teaching English in Poland.

There are a number of non-Council recruited British teachers at universities. Their number has grown greatly this year - estimates vary, but there could be as many as 30-40 in all: these Polish-recruited teachers are prepared to be paid in 'soft' non-convertible currency that has to be spent in Poland and tend to be new linguistic graduates seeking a change of scene and practical ELT experience.

6.10 Restricting oneself only to the 8 Council-recruited lecturers their activities cover the whole spectrum of ELT. The universities give them virtually unlimited opportunity and freedom to discover and develop their respective strengths; they work in total cooperation with their Polish colleagues. Three of our lecturers have recently given papers at International Linguistic Conferences in Poland, others contribute regularly to Polish learned journals; they are also involved in materials production, particularly a scheme for producing units needed for oral comprehension, as well as their regular direct teaching commitments. Several of our lecturers also help to staff the summer courses in Poland: these summer courses are a major feature of Council activity in the country. The ELO also finds himself very actively involved in a similar type of spectrum.

6.11 British Teaching Materials: Loans and limited presentations of all ELT materials are directed at the tertiary level only. Polish TV has

recently shown THE SCIENTIST SPEAKS and SLIM JOHN with considerable success, there being specially-prepared Polish versions of these productions. Mrs Barbara Goldsmidt of the BBC keeps in direct touch with the Polish TV and Radio authorities and the most recent of the BBC English by Radio series are likely to be accepted and broadcast next year. The annual WARSAW BOOK-FAIR draws the attention of Polish teachers of English to the latest British textbooks and back-up materials. It is perhaps appropriate to note here that the Cambridge Examinations - First Certificate and Proficiency, and in one case the Diploma - are taken bi-annually with a reasonably satisfactory rate of passes at two centres. There is growing interest in these examinations by the secondary school authorities, and a further centre for secondary teachers sitting First Certificate may be required next year.

6.12 Direct Teaching at the Council Centre: There is none at present, but the possibility of this is at present being explored. The students would, hopefully, be drawn from Council bursars and scholars whose English needs some 'topping up' prior to their departure to UK. The ELO this year carried out a series of well-attended lectures for advanced students of English and the Council lecturer in Warsaw also contributed a series of 4 lectures on English phonology.

7. American Support for the Teaching of English

American activity has been largely concentrated on the teacher re-training programme - funded by the Ford Foundation and administered by CAL (see above). Mr George McCready, to be replaced in August by Miss Gloria Kreisher, has cooperated with great generosity and enthusiasm with the ELO at all times and in all things, and this is the established tradition in Poland. The Americans, as the British do, place lecturers (usually of high quality) in Polish universities;their numbers are smaller this year, marginally, and there are now some 10 or 12 of them. There is active and harmonious cooperation at the summer courses where British Council and American recruited lecturers specially teach in courses for secondary teachers, second year undergraduates from all the English Philology Departments, and a long course for scientists and technologists. It is likely, with the swing away from the Davies Test by British universities (eg Imperial College) towards the TEOFL Test, that it will be necessary next year to call for help from one's American colleagues which will assuredly be very readily given.

8. General Statement

Summarising, the strengths of the ELT situation in Poland would be:

i. The enormous and growing enthusiasm for English and official support for this;

ii. The high quality of the tertiary teachers and the materials they are producing.

The weaknesses:

i. The shortage of native speakers - there is a great demand for colloquial, conversational English;

ii. The difficulties at the secondary level, where chronic staff shortages combined with a lack of properly qualified teachers make re-training programmes hard to implement;

iii. Exchange problems that make the purchase in hard currency of ELT materials extremely difficult for many interested in learning English, and also prevent people from travelling to UK where English would be so much more easily and naturally acquired.

9. Current Research and Bibliography

9.1 All the British Council lecturers submit an annual report about their work and research at their respective universities, and these are available at the British Council in London.

9.2 Part of the American funding administered by CAL was towards the production of a pedagogical grammar, under the authorship of Dr Tomasz Krzeszowski. This will be published within the next 2 or 3 years. A further activity under CAL was the encouragement of Polish-English Contrastive Linguistic Studies; several volumes of these collected papers are also available at the British Council ETIC Library.

9.3 The textbooks, to be available at the ETIC Library, also by Dr Smolska and Mr Leszek Szkutnik, give a good idea of the high quality of what is being produced at present - particularly recommended is Szkutnik's 'Think in English', a book with sales of some 50,000 in Poland, perhaps one of the most poetic and charming textbooks ever written.

9.4 Dr Bernard Lott's report of his visit to Poland in 1970 still has much relevance.

9.5 In preparation is Mr Carver's and Mr Shiell's joint report on the 'Rabka Experiment'; there is also an article about 'Rabka' from the Polish side by Mrs Z Salawa in 'SYSTEM' for May 1975 - she is one of Mr Shiell's colleagues.

9.6 Dr John D Brunton's excellent 'Educational Profile of Poland' (1974) is available, too, at the Council in London.